



Are Service Champions the Catalysts to Improve Patient Satisfaction?

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BACKGROUND

In the last MOH Patient Satisfaction Survey (PSS), our Allied Health Professionals (AHP) ranked lowest amongst all restructured hospitals in both category items surveyed. These 2 items were the "Knowledge and Skills" (KS) and "Care and Concern" (CC) demonstrated by our AHP. Since AHP at KKH straddle across different divisions and departments, there is an imminent need to consolidate everyone for a targeted approach to improve the service experience of our patients and narrow our service gaps.

METHODS

We sought management approval to appoint "Service Champions" in every major department offering main Allied Health (AH) services. Collectively, Service Champions formed the AH Service Quality (SQ) Club for greater ownership of service excellence within each department (Figure 1). Regular fortnight meetings were convened to share best practices and discuss action plans from this centralised "think-tank" for implementation by each Service Champion at the department level. Outcome measures included the percentage of ratings given to our AHP as "Excellent" by our patients on a monthly basis based on the 2 category items surveyed by MOH PSS. In addition, excellent indices and service gap scores for 2012 were also compared with those achieved in 2010.

RESULTS

After a series of meetings, the AH SQ Club rolled out the following action plans to narrow the service gaps:

(a) Setting up of SQ corner

This display board (Figure 2) explicitly increased the level of SQ awareness within the department and provided AHP with a visual cue on the various actions implemented to address service lapses within various departments.



Figure 3. Various issues of the Allied Health Service Quality Gazette.

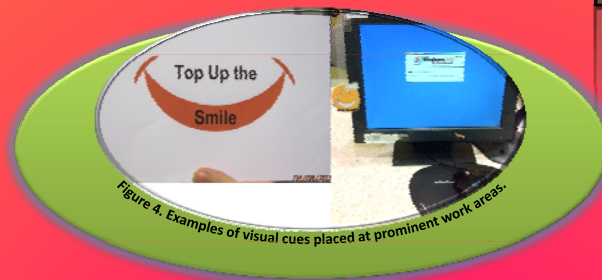


Figure 4. Examples of visual cues placed at prominent work areas.



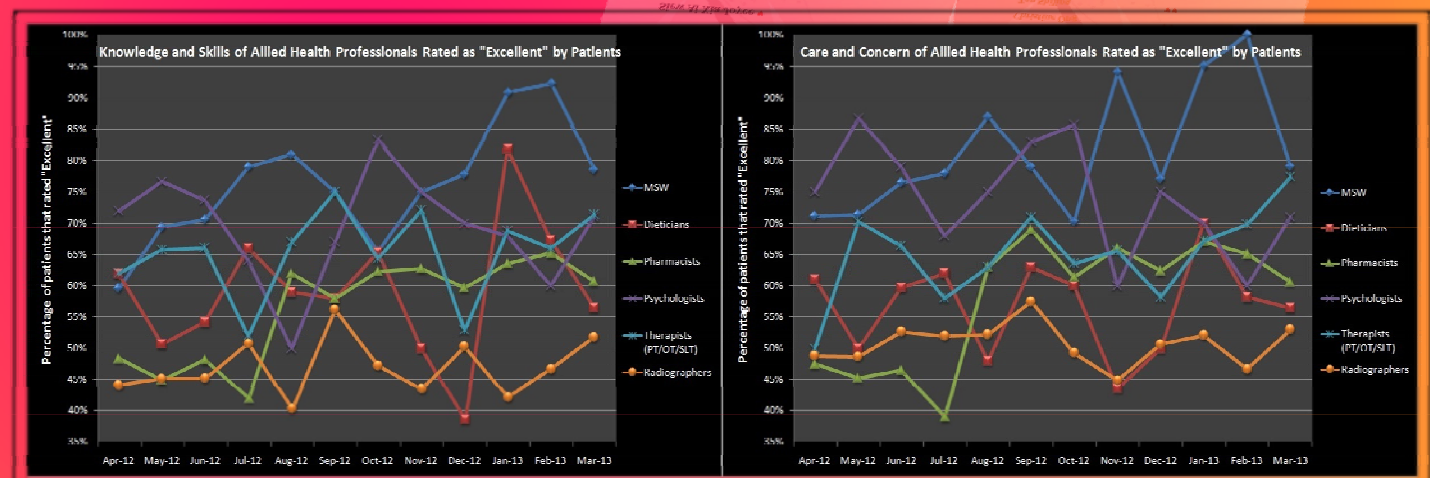
Figure 2. Service Quality corner of departments providing Allied Health services.



Figure 5. "Hearts in Service Diary" report card.

(b) Influencing a culture of SQ excellence

- A monthly AH SQ Gazette, addressing the importance of SingHealth quality priorities "SPREE" was written by Service Champions. Subsequently, we adopted the service culture transformation principles adopted by Henry Ford Health System (Henry Ford Health System, 2012), see Figure 3.
- Visual and physical cues to inculcate service excellence were also implemented e.g. wobblers attached to computer monitors, random "Top up the Smile" cards attached to patients' medical notes (Figure 4).
- Departments were also asked to include an agenda item "SQ Matters" during their meetings.
- Activity sheets were implemented for departments with direct patient contact.



(c) Recognising service excellence for staff members in each department

Alongside the AH SQ Gazette, the number of compliments received by individual staff on a monthly basis is displayed as a "report" card on the SQ corner (Figure 5).

Outcome measures showed improvement in excellent ratings across all AHP within the 12 month period for both category items (Figure 6). Medical Social Workers achieved the highest rating consistently in the last quarter for both category items. Pharmacists made a stark improvement between Jul-12 and Aug-12, and managed to sustain their ratings above 60% from Oct-12 onwards for both category items. For MOH PSS service gaps and excellent indices, the former narrowed by a margin of 4.8 (KS) and 6.0 (CC), while excellence indices improved by 0.24 for KS but deteriorated by 0.19 for CC. when compared with results of 2010.

CONCLUSIONS

Service Champions are indeed catalysts to infuse excellent service culture within the department. The AH SQ Club will be embarking on case reviews to learn and model from published best practices (Berry & Bendapudi, 2003; Sucher & McManus, 2005).

References

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